



Department
for International
Development



DFID Management Response

June 2016

DFID Management Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact report: “Assessing DFID’s Results in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): An Impact Review. May 2016”

DFID is grateful to ICAI for its thoughtful approach to this review. DFID notes that ICAI recognises the important achievement of the UK Government target to support 60 million people gain access to water, sanitation and hygiene between 2011 and 2015. ICAI rightly notes that this has made a significant contribution to global access to water, sanitation and hygiene. DFID notes the conclusion that the results claim was based on robust and credible data collected using appropriate methods and conservative assumptions. The number of people reached with sanitation and hygiene are not based solely on assumed numbers of users of service as stated in the report, but based on counts of people with access to toilets.

The report raises a number of important issues in water and sanitation that DFID is addressing.

Measuring development impact of WASH programmes

ICAI rightly identifies the need for DFID to ensure that the impact of WASH programmes is adequately assessed through robust monitoring and evaluation methods and more is done to identify impacts of WASH programmes on priority groups.

The DFID methodology for measuring results in WASH, to be published online, sets out how data should be disaggregated by gender, disability, urban/rural and wealth to show the range of groups who have benefited. This will be based on data collected on a sample basis of the users of WASH and allow an in-depth analysis of which groups benefit from DFID support.

On the wider development impact of WASH programmes, DFID has undertaken a number of impact evaluations, for instance in Bangladesh, which have demonstrated the range of health and other benefits derived from access to these services. A further four impact evaluations are planned or underway on current programmes, including in Ethiopia. These evaluations will provide more data on the benefits derived from access to WASH facilities. As new programmes are developed, further evaluations will be planned, for instance in new centrally managed programmes currently under design. Such analyses will continue to be based on robust methods focused on good experimental design and where causal relationships can be established.

DFID continues to work closely with partners such as UNICEF, Plan, Oxfam and S-N-V to ensure programmes are supported by robust monitoring and evaluation, including looking at the impact on vulnerable groups. For example, the WASH Results programme has invested significantly in supporting delivery partners to strengthen their monitoring systems. This was backed this up through independent verification of their monitoring systems and the data they collect. DFID funded research, for instance under the SHARE programme, is helping to continuously improve the approach to measuring impact of WASH programmes.

The sustainability of WASH programming

ICAI note that sustaining access to water and sanitation services and maintaining hygiene behaviours is a continuing challenge. DFID's own research corroborates this. In terms of the results achieved between 2011 and 2015, it is too early to draw strong conclusions on sustainability. DFID plans to assess, in the coming 2-3 years, how many people reached during this period continue to have access.

DFID programmes all place an emphasis on ensuring that WASH services are sustainable. How this is done varies between different programmes to take into account local context, capacity and needs. For instance, in Ethiopia, support is provided to the Government to improve its monitoring and evaluation capability so that it is able to track whether people continue to have access to services and to take action when services have failed. This improved capability will enable the Government of Ethiopia to improve planning and delivery of WASH services. All WASH programmes designed by DFID are encouraged to undertake assessments of sustainability of programmes, including considering provision for assessments to be undertaken after project completion.

The DFID WASH monitoring methodology notes show how DFID funded programmes should assess and monitor sustainability. This includes ensuring that programmes apply a locally-determined discount factor when there is evidence of people who have been supported to get access to WASH do not use the services provided after a period of time. The notes set out the data to be collected on the extent to which programmes have considered operational and environmental sustainability and what actions have been taken to build national and local capacity to sustain services.

ICAI notes that many DFID programmes are of 3-5 years duration and this may be too short to ensure sustainability. In many countries DFID support to WASH is over a much longer period of time, delivered through multiple sequential projects. For instance in countries such Ethiopia, Nigeria and Bangladesh, the results reported against meeting the Government target in 2015 come on top of many previous years, and in some cases decades, of support.

Value for money

ICAI recognises the important work DFID has done to develop methods for assessing value for money in WASH and encourages DFID to act quickly to develop a framework for measuring value and guiding programme choices. DFID has developed robust methods for assessing value for money based on research commissioned centrally. Guidance notes have been published to support country offices and partners to collect and analyse data to assess value for money.

The ICAI review notes that assessing value for money in the WASH sector is constrained by a lack of data. DFID is addressing this by developing stronger data sets on the total and disaggregated costs of WASH programmes and the impact and benefits they deliver in order to derive a clear picture of the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes, and of unit costs. As more data becomes available, DFID will be able to make better comparisons of value for money in different contexts. However, DFID research demonstrates that costs are heavily dependent on the local context and technology type. Comparing different WASH programmes must take these factors into account to deliver meaningful assessment on which to base programme choices. Simple unit cost comparisons have only limited utility.

DFID has worked closely with UNICEF on value for money in its programming, recognising that funding is not awarded on a competitive process in the majority of cases. For instance, UNICEF has been supported by DFID to develop and apply value for money assessments in the 'Accelerating Sanitation and Water for All in neglected off-track countries' programme. DFID will continue to work with UNICEF to ensure it delivers value for money and increased commercial awareness through future programmes of support.

DFID pioneered the use of payment by results in WASH through the WASH Results Programme and this has yielded important benefits both in terms of value for money and in expanding the WASH suppliers market for DFID. In the WASH Results programme payment by results has been applied in both the output (delivering access) and outcome (sustained use) phases of the programme. This approach has created the right incentives for suppliers to focus on sustainability of WASH.

Sharing learning on WASH throughout DFID

ICAI recognises the important role DFID plays in funding research in WASH. DFID is one of the largest research funders in the sector. Programmes such

as SHARE have delivered world-class research that has improved the global evidence on how WASH can be delivered effectively. This builds on a long history of DFID research funding stretching back to the 1990s.

DFID believes that sharing learning from projects and research is critical to successful delivery of WASH programmes. DFID ensures that evidence and lessons are shared across the organisation and with partners. DFID publishes all annual reviews, project completion reports and evaluations of WASH projects and these contain statements of the lessons learned.

DFID ensures that lessons from programmes and research funded by DFID are shared across the network of staff working on WASH. This occurs through regular meetings of the network of advisers and programme managers working on WASH programmes, as well as through sessions at Professional Development Conferences. Lesson-sharing is further enhanced by encouraging advisers to use time for professional development to undertake design and reviews of projects in different countries and departments. This facilitates cross-learning and helps inform projects across DFID.

DFID also uses web-based resources to store and share evidence, although as ICAI notes uptake has become limited. DFID funded research also aids design and monitoring of programmes, for instance in applying improved value for money metrics and in building greater resilience in WASH to climate change,

DFID's knowledge is widely used by others in the WASH sector and ICAI notes that other stakeholders acknowledge the value of DFID's investment in knowledge generation. DFID disseminates this knowledge via the R4D website and through presentations at events such as Stockholm World Water Week and the UNC Water and Health conference.

ICAI suggest that DFID could invest more in knowledge exchange between WASH and sectors such as health and education. Regular dialogue takes place at both a country level and in policy, for instance through participation in health and education adviser events.